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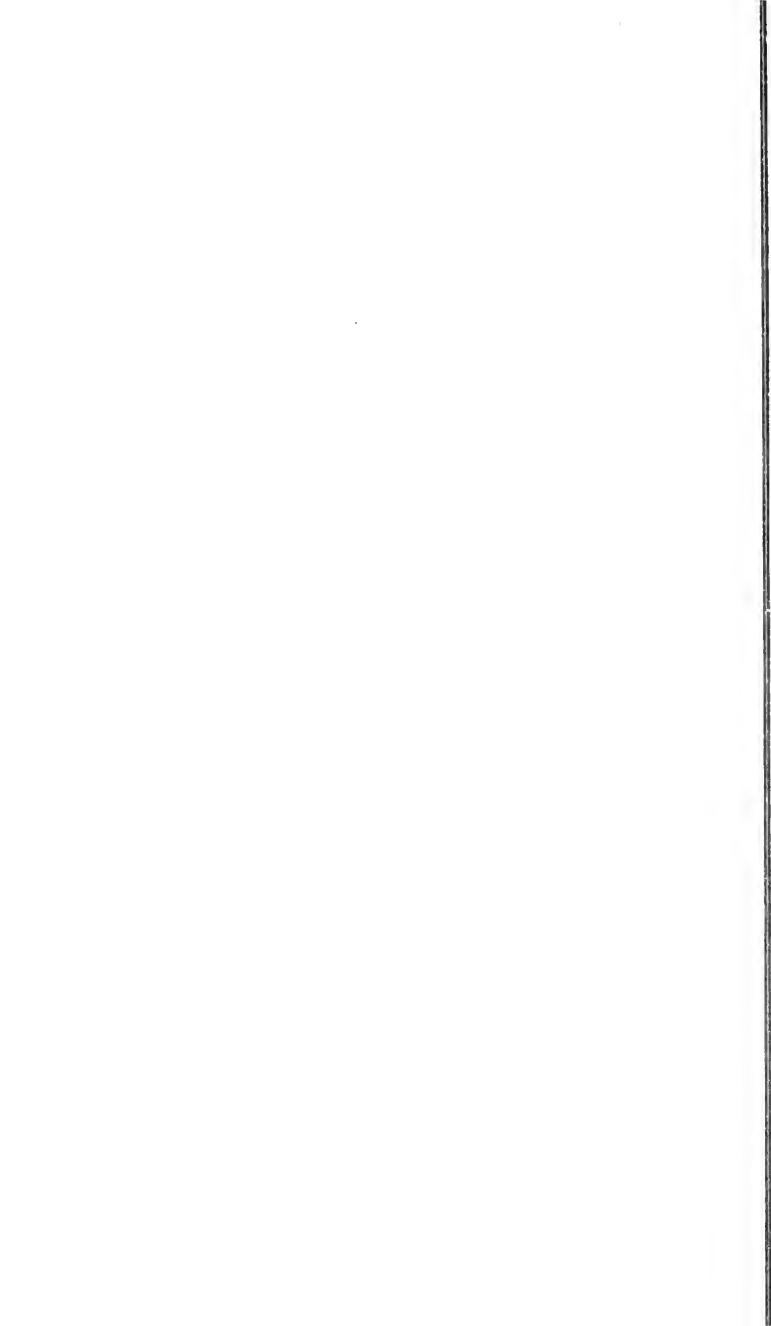
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THE HISTORY OF
George H. Thomas Post No. 5,
DEPARTMENT OF ILLINOIS
GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC
for twenty-five years.

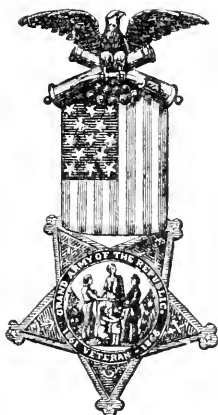


An Address delivered before the Post, August 12, 1898,
by Past Commander HENRY C. COOKE.
Celebrating the twenty-fifth Anniversary of the
Posts organization.

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George H. Thomas Post

No. 5

Department of Illinois

Grand Army of the Republic.

The first twenty-five years
of
George H. Thomas Post
No. 5,

DEPARTMENT OF ILLINOIS
GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC

An Address by
Past-Commander Henry G. Gooke.

WHEN an audience is about to be afflicted with dry historical items, it is well to make known why such imposition is placed upon them, and the reason in this case is, that on June 26, 1896, at a regular meeting, Comrade Vernon moved that Comrade Cooke prepare the history of the Post, the same to be read at its twenty-fifth anniversary. The motion was carried, and so to-night the success or failure of my effort to carry out the instruction named must be placed upon the sturdy shoulders of our present Post Commander. He little thought when the original motion was offered that Comrade Vernon, himself, would be in full command, when its instructions were finally carried out.

In thinking the matter over it did not seem to me that there could be much to tell, but as memory unrolled page after page of events long past, and almost forgotten, and as the written record told its tale of days gone by, it came to me that there was a story worth telling, and so to-night you shall be given as many items as the time allowed me will permit.

It is said of Illinois in the song:

“Not without thy wondrous story,
Can be writ the nation's glory!”

and it may be said with equal truth, that without the story of George H. Thomas Post of Chicago the history of the Grand Army of the Republic cannot be written; and as for the members of this great Post who served everywhere during the war of the rebellion, let me quote the words used on another occasion by some one, saying: “All through that dark and desperate fight, wherever the battle was fiercest, wherever the air was foul with death, wherever the waves of war beat highest, wherever the line of battle came closest together, wherever men tugged and strained with their hot, hissing breath flying in each other's faces; whether among the hills of Missouri, along the murky waters of the Mississippi, in the valleys of Tennessee, back and forth over the blood-stained ground of Virginia, along the storm-beaten coast of the Atlantic; wherever the tide of war ebbed and flowed, there were these comrades, holding aloft the banner of their several states by the side of the Stars and Stripes.” For the members of this Post served in all the armies of the Union, from the Potomac to

the Rio Grande, along the Gulf, and up the Atlantic coast again, to Fortress Mouroe. And now for my story.

During Sherman's campaign to Meridian, Miss., in February, 1864, two earnest men, thinking of the future, exchanged ideas, and the burden of the thought expressed by them, as they wearily marched along, was that the soldiers so closely allied in the fellowship of suffering would, when mustered out of the service, desire some form of association that should preserve the friendships and memories of their common trials and danger.

Those two men were Surgeon Stephenson and Chaplain Rutledge of the 14th Illinois Infantry Volunteers, and as they talked together from time to time the thought expanded and grew in importance to them, and it was agreed that if they were spared they would work out some such project.

This is the earliest record towards forming an association, designed to include in its membership the ex-soldiers and sailors of the Union Army and Navy in general that is known.

The war came to an end—veterans and recruits after being mustered out, melted away into the general population, the pursuits and pleasures of civil life were again assumed. The army had disappeared like dew before the morning sun, but the thought of 1864 still lingered in the minds of those earnest men and finally culminated in the organization of the Grand Army of the Republic. The first

Post chartered was located at Decatur, Ill., and its charter was dated April 6, 1866.

It is not my purpose to tell the history of the Grand Army of the Republic, but it seemed proper, in telling the history of this Post, to briefly state how the original organization was launched upon a career that has proved so honorable and important in carrying out a useful mission.

The first George H. Thomas Post in Chicago was organized in the fall of 1868, but after a short and uneventful life was disbanded.

The fire of 1871 checked the growth of the order in Chicago, and at the time of the organization of George H. Thomas Post No. 6, Department of Illinois, there was but one Post in the city, and this soon ceased to exist.

In 1873, the year of our organization, the commander-in-chief of the Grand Army of the Republic was Comrade Ambrose E. Burnside, who was serving his second term, the Adjutant General being Roswell Miller, now residing in Chicago, and well known to all. The records at that date do not state what the membership of the order was.

The seventh annual encampment of the Department of Illinois was held in Chicago, January 22, 1873, presided over by Comrade H. Dilger, Department Commander. The report of the A. A. General showing a total membership in the Department at that date of 238, also announcing the

fact that it was gain of five over previous year. Receipts were \$52.19 and disbursements the same amount. Indebtedness to National Department, \$85, and only four Posts reporting to the Department regularly. In 1874, at the annual encampment held in Rockford, announcement was made of a gain of 200 members during the year. In 1875 the encampment was held at Joliet and thirteen Posts reported, with about 1,200 members.

The foregoing showing is made that you may know how insignificant the order was at the time this Post was started. George H. Thomas Post No. 6 was organized and its first officers installed, August 21, 1873, in Good Templars Hall, corner Lake and Seymour streets, with twenty-four charter members, and the name which it bears was adopted at that time. To Comrade Hiram Hilliard is due the credit of starting the work along that resulted in forming the Post.

After meeting in sundry places, the first permanent home was secured by renting Leonard's Hall, 998 West Madison street, and our first meeting was held there, Nov. 14, 1873. The struggle for existence now began, for money was not so plentiful in those days as it has been since, and when the first by-laws were printed at a cost of \$10 for 300 copies, it was thought that quite a financial transaction had been successfully carried through. May 1, 1874, the first attempt was made to uniform the comrades, and May 30th the first detail at cemetery to decorate the graves of deceased soldiers was dutifully attended to. The Post, as you see, began to do duty in its earliest days.

To show how nemesis follows on the track of a certain person, a note is found in the record under date of August 14, 1874, saying that Comrade Cooke is detailed to report progress of Post during first year, and he is, as you see, still reporting. Small in number, poor in purse, but earnest in the work, the first year has passed; at times it was hardly possible to get a quorum to hold a Post meeting; sometimes it seemed that courage would fail, for the Grand Army of the Republic was not in favor in Chicago in its early days.

The year 1874 was uneventful, but as the days, one by one, were counted off, it was found that needed lessons had been learned by the comrades, and that much valuable experience was left in store for future use.

The first important event of 1875 was the election to membership on April 30th of that illustrious son of Illinois, John A. Logan. For some reason he was never mustered, so that George H. Thomas Post cannot claim him as a member.

In May of this year the National Encampment was held in Chicago, and while the opening exercises were in McCormick Hall, the business meeting occurred in a small room in the Grand Pacific Hotel, not more than one hundred being present, all told. The Grand Army of the Republic was small indeed at this time. The Post performed its full part in entertaining and helping in whatever way the occasion required.

The summer had passed, and the cool weather of approaching winter was arriving fast, matters

were going wrong, and it looked as if the Post was about to come to a sudden and untimely end, when on November 26th a motion was made to surrender the charter and wind up its affairs. The motion had the desired effect, for it was voted down, and the comrades realized the fact that active and persistent work was necessary to make the organization a success.

November 26th, Comrade S. F. Brown asked for transfer, and Dec. 3rd Comrades Wilson, Parker and Rank asked for transfers, and all being granted, they, with others started Reynolds Post, and Comrade S. F. Brown was elected its first commander. This may be considered the first child of George H. Thomas Post; as the years have gone by this child has flourished, grown, and finally changed its name, so that we know it now as U. S. Grant Post No. 28. Post meetings had been held weekly from date of organization, but on Dec. 31, 1875, they were changed to the second and fourth Fridays of each month.

Jan. 1, 1876, our meeting place was moved to Hall of Cashman Lodge, corner of Madison and Robey streets, and from this time it can be said that success has been with the Post.

Jan. 19, 1876, our first court martial was held and the accused found guilty. Many items like foregoing are mentioned, not because of great merit, but for sake of showing about what time things had a beginning.

April 14th, Comrades H. P. Thompson and H. C. Cooke inaugurated the reading of papers

before the Post, thus introducing what has proved to be a pleasant form of evening entertainment.

Sept. 1, 1876, the number of the Post was changed from No. 6 to No. 5, and since that time this has been Geo. H. Thomas Post No. 5. May 30, 1877, by courtesy of the street car companies, the comrades and families were taken without change of cars from the West Side to Graceland cemetery, where roses and garlands were strewn over the graves of comrades buried there, by little girls. It was a beautiful and impressive memorial day.

In July, the railroad riots, starting first in Pittsburg, reached our city, and a cry came for help, when, true to its old time loyalty, the Post, responded to the call, and from July 23rd to 30th, 1877, with rifle in hand and ammunition in pouch, helped to keep order in the city. Time will not permit me to detail all the adventures that occurred in these seven days, but the Post was praised for its action and the newspapers of the day gave it the credit of being the best drilled body of veterans that turned out in Chicago.

A rifle club had been formed in the Post, and on June 7, 1878, a competitive shoot was held with the best rifle club in New York City, and the Geo. H. Thomas Rifle Club were the winners, by a score that has never been made in any similar contest up to this time. Ten of our comrades shooting against a like number of the New York Club, made a score of 460 out of a possible 500, an average of 46 points to each man.

Feb. 14, 1879, a motion was made and carried, 27 to 7, that the Post move to the South Side, and on March 4, 1879, our first meeting was held in Accordia Hall, 112-114 Randolph street, meeting night having been changed from Friday to the second and fourth Thursday of each month; this change becoming necessary as no hall could be found that could be had for our regular Friday night meetings

Sept. 25th, application was received, and on October 23, 1879, Lieutenant General Philip H. Sheridan was duly mustered in and became a member of the Post. He was presented with a Grand Army badge, a gold bar properly engraved attached, and it was his pride to wear it on all proper occasions.

The Post turned out in a body to welcome General Grant on his return from a trip around the world, and as usual did the honors in a satisfactory manner. Nov. 27th a committee was appointed to find a hall in which to hold an annual reception, and in looking for such a place found a hall at 167 Washington street. and as the membership had begun to get too large for its temporary quarters, it was decided to rent and fit up this hall. Articles of incorporation were taken out, and the stock in shares of \$5 each was issued to raise funds for fitting up and furnishing. The comrades rallied to the cause, the money was raised, and the hall fitted up at a cost of \$540. This was the first strictly Grand Army hall in Chicago. Our first meeting and installation of officers was held in these new quarters Jan. 27, 1880.

Sept. 18, 1880, Comrade Seth F. Hanchett presented the Post with a set of thirty-five etchings, and in addition to their being a very interesting study, depicting old army scenes, they have now come to be a valuable collection. It would be hard to purchase a duplicate set at any price.

Jan. 19, 1862, the battle of Mill Spring was fought between General Geo. H. Thomas and General Zollicoffer. The rebels were defeated and General Zollicoffer was killed. Dec. 23, 1880, the sword of General Zollicoffer was presented to this Post by Comrade A. M. Cook, who says "this modern weapon was taken from General Zollicoffer's body by a hospital steward and presented to A. M. Cook, surgeon in charge, who now presents it to George H. Thomas Post No. 5, Dept. Illinois. G. A. R., of which he is a member."

This was the first signal victory gained by General George H. Thomas, and this Post, named in his honor, is possessor of the sword worn by the General whom he vanquished.

April 15, 1881, a committee on history and publication was appointed, but no work of note was done by them. Sept. 30, 1881, a vote to organize a drum corps passed, the members of the corps to be the sons of members of the Post. This drum corps was properly instructed by Comrade Harry Wagar and kept uniformed, and was the pride of the Post during its career of a year or two. It was found, however, that the boys composing its membership would outgrow uniforms frequently, and its services were finally dispensed with.

From Sept. 30, 1881, to June 13, 1884, nothing of any great moment occurred in the work of the Post. A time of peace and quiet prevailed. Many recruits were gained, and the usual work of a rapidly growing society was carried on. Everything worked in harmony, and charity for the needy with good-fellowship one toward another seemed to prevail at all times.

June 27, 1884, Comrade Cole of Post 40 being present at a regular meeting called attention to the fact that there was quite a sum of money in hands of some one which was originally raised for the Soldiers Home of Chicago during the war, so rumor said, and a committee was appointed to look into the matter, with like committees from other Posts, and see if said money could not be secured for the benefit, in some way, of the Grand Army of the Republic, and veterans in general. This appears to be the earliest move to secure the funds which have since gone into the Public Library building for the benefit of the veterans, resulting in the erection of the Memorial Hall and assembly rooms, where this meeting is held tonight.

July 11, 1884, a womans' auxiliary corps was proposed for the first time, but it never became an auxiliary to the Post, as the proposal was not received with favor by the comrades.

Oct. 10, 1884, the committee previously appointed reported that committees from the various Posts proposed to form a corporation to be known as The Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall Association.

Early in 1885 it was found a large defalcation in the funds of the Post had taken place, and a loss of twelve hundred dollars resulted therefrom. A small portion of this money was recovered at a later date.

March 27, 1885, Comrade Hiram Hilliard announced that a petition had been prepared to be sent to the State Legislature, asking that a State Soldiers Home be established, at the same time requesting the comrades to sign it. The result of this effort is visible in the State Soldiers and Sailors Home at Quincy. The original bill which became a law providing for its erection, was drawn up by Comrade E. A. Blodgett of this Post. July 24, 1885, the death of the silent commander, U. S. Grant, was announced, and suitable resolutions were passed. The hall was draped in mourning and the Post attended the funeral obsequies to do the last sad honors to our greatest commander. At this meeting Comrade Stockton presented to the Post the original order, in General Grant's handwriting, directing that every battery bearing upon, and within reach of the enemy, open fire at once in honor of Sherman's capture of Atlanta.

Jan. 22, 1886, report was made of the death of Comrade Hiram Hilliard, which occurred at Oberlin, Kansas, Jan. 9, 1886. Comrade Hilliard was the second commander of the Post, though at the time of his death he was not a member.

Feb. 12, 1886, the comrades voted to endorse Senate Bill No. 925, changing dedication of Dearborn Park, said bill having been introduced by

Senator John A. Logan, and asked all members of Congress from Illinois to vote for it. At this time a stereopticon was ordered bought, and it has since been in constant use adding interest to our muster nights.

The question of a memorial service coming before the comrades, it was voted on Dec. 10th to hold such service to the memory of the comrades who had died during the year; these services were inaugurated Jan. 16, 1887, and up to this time have been held annually. The dead have not been forgotten, but with solemn prayer, with speech in eulogy, and with mournful song, they have been remembered in the closing days of each recurring year.

A special meeting of the Post was held Feb. 14, 1887, to take action requesting the Legislature to aid the Soldiers and Sailors Orphans Home at Normal, to provide funds for more buildings and other necessary accommodations. Also asking the Legislature to pass a law forbidding the wearing of the Grand Army badge by unauthorized persons.

Feb. 24, 1888, the Post was honored by the visit of Comrade John Brown, Jr., a member of Post No. 50, Sandusky, Ohio. Comrade Brown was a son of Old John Brown, of Harper's Ferry fame in 1859. It may be said that John Brown's raid was the forerunner of the rebellion, but had he waited a little longer, an opportunity to fight for the Union and against slavery would have furnished him a lawful reason for going to war.

In the usual course of business, the landlord of Grand Army Hall at 167 Washington street demanded a higher rent, and as the comrades began to feel that it was becoming harder work to climb the stairs to a fourth floor, headquarters, and as the rent demanded seemed exorbitant, a committee had been appointed to look for new quarters, and on May 11, 1888, this committee reported that arrangements had been concluded to take the hall in Honore Block, up one flight of stairs only, for a term of three years, at a rental of \$150 a month for the first year, and \$170 per month for the balance of the term. The committee's action was ratified by the Post.

May 25, 1888, the serious illness of our gallant Comrade General P. H. Sheridan was reported, and a telegram of sympathy sent to Mrs. Sheridan.

June 29, 1888, the Post gave a reception to comrades and friends and appropriate exercises were held in dedication of new Grand Army Hall in Honore Block.

The death of our Comrade General P. H. Sheridan having been announced, a special meeting was called Aug. 7, 1888, to take action in the matter; appropriate resolutions were passed, a floral offering was ordered purchased for the Post in Washington, which was done for us by the Hon. Wm. E. Mason, and the last sad tribute of respect was paid to our most illustrious member.

Dec. 28, 1888, announcement was made that the collection for the Logan Monument fund amounted to \$352.05, the same being the largest

collection made by any Post, and the committee having the matter in charge were discharged with a large vote of thanks.

Resolutions were adopted Jan. 25, 1889, asking the Legislature to pass a bill granting a portion of Dearborn Park for the use of the Grand Army of the Republic, on which to build a library of war history and a museum of war relics, mementos, etc.

The flowers for use at cemeteries on Memorial Day were furnished by the school children for the first time, and May 30, 1889, in this way changed the former method of getting needed floral material.

Aug. 18, 1889, the Post voted to go to the National Encampment at Milwaukee by boat, and in carrying out this resolution took water for the first time in its history. From experience gained on that trip, it is safe to say that the comrades will not repeat the experiment.

Under date of Aug. 23, 1889, Major Robert Anderson, Post No. 7, Department of Georgia and South Carolina, sends fraternal greetings and announces that its officers had been installed by a comrade of Geo. H. Thomas Post No. 5, Department Illinois, within the historic walls of Ft. Sumter, on Aug. 9, 1889. We may be proud indeed that a comrade of this Post performed such a duty in so memorable a place. Alway up to date, and ready to take position in the front line, the Post, on Aug. 23, 1889, adopted resolutions favoring Chicago for the World's Fair in 1892.

On Nov. 8, 1889, Martin Conrad, a generous member of the Post, in the kindness of his heart, wishing to do good to such as might need assistance, conceived and carried into effect the idea of establishing a permanent fund, and to help the plan along made a personal donation of \$535 as a nucleus, to which other contributions might be added from time to time. One condition of the donation was that the fund should be known as the Conrad Widows and Orphans Endowment Fund of George H. Thomas Post. The principal sum, and such additions as may be made thereto, were to be invested and the income to be used to aid destitute widows and orphans of members of George H. Thomas Post.

A further provision was made that should the Post cease to exist, then the trustees in charge of said funds can extend the same relief to any other Post in the City of Chicago, and in the year 1910, or at any time thereafter, the Board of Trustees, if they so elect, may expend the principal of the fund for the benefit of the indigent widows and orphans of ex-Union soldiers and sailors of the civil war.

At a later date the Post voted an addition of one thousand dollars to this fund, with the agreement that a comrade would raise another thousand dollars and donate to the same fund. The Post paid in the money voted but up to this date the comrade has not kept his promise and raised the second thousand dollars. The creation of this fund is one of the real unselfish acts of the comrade who started it, and much good will eventually

come from having such a supply of money to use in time of pressing need.

At a meeting held Dec. 13, 1889, it was stated that the Library Board was about to take possession of Dearborn Park, and a motion prevailed that a committee from this Post be appointed to urge the general committee of soldiers organizations to take immediate possession of that portion of Dearborn Park set apart by the legislature for the use of the soldiers home, and to commence the building of a memorial hall.

It is proper to say that during the war of the Rebellion the Soldiers Home in Chicago was located on the corner of Randolph street and Michigan avenue, and a portion of Dearborn Park was given to the Soldiers Home organization, as it existed at that time. It has since become quite a factor in Grand Army matters.

Dec. 27, 1889, the death was announced of Mrs. Francis Lucretia Thomas, widow of General George H. Thomas, after whom our Post was named, and resolutions of sympathy were duly passed.

The first important item in 1890 was the fact reported April 25th that the Post had reached its first high water mark, and that the rolls show a membership of just one thousand. There was great rejoicing, and on May 9th a time of jollification was held for, from the smallness of a child the Post had at last ^{grown} ~~reached~~ ^{attained} the stature of a full grown man, was a full regiment so to speak, and almost the largest Post in the Grand Army of the Republic.

Chicago has held many good and patriotic citizens, and among them was one that the old soldiers could always call friend, and that one was our fellow-citizen, J. H. McVicker. He was with us, and for us, all the time, and on June 13, 1890, announcement was made stating he had issued an order that during each and every performance at his theater the music of the Star Spangled Banner should be played. Where will we find another such record.

June 27, 1890, was the banner meeting of our history, for on that night, at the regular muster, forty new recruits with right hands raised to heaven took the solemn obligation that unite us and became comrades. This was the largest number ever mustered in at one time in the Post's history.

Sorrow comes to societies, just as it does to families, and when a comrade that all have known and loved is called away, sadness and tears prevail. The record shows the death, under date of Aug. 8, 1890, of Past Commander Wm. H. Wilder, a man loved by every member of the Post. It would be hard to find a comrade more thoroughly respected than was Comrade Wilder.

The National Encampment of 1890 was held in Boston, and on the way to that place the Post visited the grave of General George H. Thomas at Troy, N. Y., as a mark of respect to this great hero of the war.

The Board of Education having named a new building the George H. Thomas school, the Post

in a body visited this school, and presented it a painting of George H. Thomas, on Sept. 20, 1890, the anniversary of the day on which he gained his glorious title, The Rock of Chickamauga.

Nothing of importance occurred during the last third of 1890, the Post kept meeting, the members talking, the numbers growing—nothing more. The first important act of 1891 was a vote transferring one thousand dollars to the Conrad fund, as you have already been told.

June 12, 1891, one hundred dollars was voted towards a Memorial Hall at Decatur, Ill., but up to date the building has not been erected, nor has the money been taken from the funds of the Post. July 24, 1891, was a red letter day in our history, for on that date Major General Nelson A. Miles was duly elected and became a member of the Post by transfer.

The Woman Soldiers Home having been started, it would not be fair for me to omit the fact that on August 28, 1891, a motion was made to appropriate \$50 for the benefit of this Home, but on vote being taken, the motion was lost. The argument against the motion was that as the Home was started to relieve the Grand Army, it was not just to ask the Post for help at the beginning.

Nov. 27, 1891, was another date long to be remembered, for in the evening of that day Comrade Valentine J. Slee was duly mustered, and signed his name as No. 1,200 on the rolls, making a new high water mark. There was much rejoicing over the event, and the Doxology was sung.

The Worlds' Fair enterprise having assumed a definite shape, many schemes and plans were presented to the Post and discussions had over taking part in various ways. Finally a scheme to get up a mounted escort was proposed, and argued with so much enthusiasm that on Dec. 11, 1891, a committee was appointed to get up the escort.

What days those were, and how well you will remember the talk. Kings, princes, dukes, notables, large and small, were coming to the show. The escort was to be superbly mounted, the uniforms were to be so magnificent, as to dazzle the eyes of all beholders, and when the train came in the escort was to meet the dignitaries, take them to the hotel, stand up to the bar and drink red liquor, smoke cigars, do the honors, and when the time came, ride down Michigan avenue and escort them to the Fair. It is hardly possible the world will ever see the like again. It was to have been simply immense. But why say more—the kings and things did not come, and the escort was never seen by mortal eyes.

Feb. 3, 1892, a comrade died in St. Louis suddenly. He was a modest, unassuming man, having a record known to but few. Just out of school, a young man of seventeen, he enlisted for service in the Mexican War, and as he learned the Spanish language readily was placed upon the staff of General Winfield Scott as official interpreter; when the city of Mexico was taken and the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was made, the young man that in later years was to become a comrade of this Post, performed a great portion of the work

in making the treaty, as he proved to be about the most capable of General Scott's assistants, owing to his knowledge of the Spanish language. That comrade, in the war of the Rebellion, became General George Gordon Miner; we laid him away in Forest Home, and under the weeping willow there, he lies, waiting the judgment day.

In view of the fact that the World's Fair would cause every one expense in entertaining friends at home, it was deemed wise to appoint a committee on ways and means, and through their efforts a lecture by Col. R. G. Ingersoll on Abraham Lincoln was given in the Auditorium, the net proceeds of which amounted to \$1,652.88. This, and other money, was held by the committee to provide for expense which might fall upon the Post in entertaining visiting comrades during the Exposition.

The story of the Post would not be complete without mention being made of Mrs. Haugan, for many years the faithful janitress and custodian of the Grand Army Hall, 167 Washington street, also the one in Honore Block. In a generous moment the comrades voted her a two months vacation to visit the old home in Sweden and Norway, and also voted her one hundred dollars to help pay the expense. The visit was made, the relatives were rejoiced, and the Post felt amply repaid, when on Aug. 26, 1892, a letter was read from a nephew who was evidently trying to learn the English language. In his communication he constantly referred to the comrades as the men of the hall. He told in his best pigeon English how glad all at

home were to see Mrs. Haugan, who had been away from them for thirty years, and finally wound up by saying "that they were all very thankful to the men of the Hall for what they had done against his aunt."

Sept. 10, 1892, the death of Comrade Frank C. Green was reported. He had been Post Quartermaster for eight years, and was a man loved by every one.

Oct. 14, 1892, the comrades voted \$150 towards a monument to be erected by the Army of the Tennessee to General Sherman, in the City of Washington.

After almost twenty years of existence, we were called upon to note the death of our first officer to die during his term of office. Officer of the Guard, Valentine J. Slee, died March 6, 1893. He was No. 1,200 on the roll of members, and in rejoicing we sang the Doxology when he joined us. A few short months and all is changed, for now the burial hymns are sung and the saddest dirges played.

The year 1893 was hardly ushered in when everything gave way to preparation for the coming Exposition, and as the landlord of Grand Army Hall wanted a small fortune for the premises, a committee was appointed and a new meeting place secured in the Masonic Temple. The first meeting in this new home was held May 12, 1893, and never did the members of a Grand Army Post in this world meet so near heaven. It was on the eighteenth floor, and when we sang Nearer My God to Thee,

we were surely telling the truth. Nearly twenty years before our meeting place had been away out on the West Side in a little frame building, but now we were in a palace, and it proved the saying again, that there is nothing too good for an old soldier.

The summer of 1893 was passed entertaining visiting comrades, and having a good time generally; Grand Army day at the World's Fair occurred Sept 9th, and George H. Thomas Post turned out in large numbers, doing honor to this special day. Among the noted visitors of the year came Commander in Chief Adams, and during his stay an old wound prostrated him, rendering surgical attendance and long nursing necessary. The Post attended to the case until he was able to be taken to his home. Other Posts assisted in this duty, but it is only just to say that the larger part of the expense of his illness was paid by Post No. 5.

Past Commander John E. Kimberly died Dec. 23, 1893; he was a veteran of the Mexican and Civil war.

Jan. 26, 1894, report was made that the Post had 1,275 members in good standing. This was the largest membership attained by the Post since its organization.

Two very important committees were appointed at this time, composed of Comrades Schilling and Moderwell. Comrade Schilling's duty was to get together the records of service of each member, and Comrade Moderwell's duty was to procure the photograph of each member of the

Post. These committees are still in existence and they have done much hard work and are still at it. The result of the work is of almost priceless value.

July 13, 1894, a bronze grave marker was adopted, and no matter in what cemetery a comrade's grave may be, one of these markers is placed at its head, so that the grave of a member of this Post can always be found when flowers are strewn on Memorial Day.

Another noted day was Aug. 21, 1894. It was the twenty-first anniversary of the Post. We were twenty-one years old, and in honor of the event a picnic was held at Burlington Park. Fun, frolic, all kinds of races, plenty of good things to eat, lovely ladies, music by the band, speeches, etc., filled up the hours. A general good time was had by all.

Comrade Cooke was surprised by the presentation to him of a beautiful Past Commander's badge, in honor of his having been a member of the Post for twenty-one years, and he again thanks his friends, the givers, for the beautiful gift.

Many times in meetings, and at other places, the subject of having a cemetery lot in which to place at rest those comrades who died with no means of burial provided, was talked over, and at last through the effort of a committee a fine lot was purchased in Rose Hill and a fitting monument placed thereon. This monument is typical, inasmuch as it represents in its massiveness a veritable Rock of Chickamauga.

It is a rough granite block, in a single piece, blasted from the bosom of mother earth, where it had reposed in its ledge since the early morning of creation, until in the fullness of days, it was brought out to mark this last resting place of a few of the nation's heroes. In dimensions it stands 12 feet 4 inches high, is 2 feet 4 inches square at the base, and weighs 33,900 pounds. The chisel of the sculptor has not marred its gray magnificence, only just enough to carve a tablet, on which is graved the name of the Post, the membership of 1,272, in 1894 when it was erected, and the glorious sentence which always belongs with the name of George H. Thomas—"The Rock of Chickamauga." Here it will stand until the last comrade of this great Post shall have been summoned to the presence of the Grand Commander, and then to new generations, as from time to time the wandering ones stop and read the inscription on its rugged face, it will say here, marked by this monument, is the last resting place of a gallant band of honored defenders of the Republic. Their comrades loved them, and raised this stone of imperishable granite to watch over and guard them while they sleep.

To Comrade Charles F. Matteson and his committee too much credit cannot be given for the work performed in carrying the matter to a successful end. This lot was bought in September, 1894, and possession of deed is noted in record under date of Feb. 22, 1895. The lot was dedicated with proper ceremonies, and memorial services ordered for each recurring year. A fund has also

been placed in hands of the cemetery authorities to pay for its care in perpetuity.

Early in 1895 Comrade Isaac Jackson endorsed by vote of the Post, had a bill introduced into the Legislature, and it became on its passage what is known as the Bogardus law; it has been of much service in furnishing needed help to old soldiers. It is but one more of the good things accomplished during the Post's history. It was so worthy a measure that when the vote was taken in the Legislature June 14, 1895, it was unanimous in favor of the bill.

May 10, 1895, the comrades placed a headstone at grave of Comrade Hilliard (the Post's second commander) in Rosehill. He had not been a member for many years, having, on moving to Kansas, taken a transfer—still he was not forgotten.

Aug. 25, 1895, one of our comrades died, who deserves more than passing mention. It was Comrade General A. M. Stout. A Kentuckian, living in a border state, with a family favoring the secession cause, opposed at every turn, yet with that loyalty to flag and country which in rebellion days made heroes of unknown men, he chose the right side and fought under the stars and stripes to the music of the Union. In many important battles, at Shiloh and Chickamauga, as colonel of the 17th Kentucky Union Infantry he did gallant service. Coming home, he was ostracized for having fought for the North, family ties were severed, and he was left to die a lonely old man. We

buried him in the Post lot at Rosehill. When the last trumpet call is heard, and the graves give up their dead, may Comrade Stout rise to great reward among the elected ones.

Among those who made music to cheer the boys in the war days was a Chicago man, and who does not remember his songs, Battle Cry of Freedom, Just Before the Battle, Tramp, Tramp, Tramp, The Vacant Chair, etc.—it was Dr. George Frederick Root, and when his death was announced in Post meeting Sept. 15, 1895, suitable resolutions were passed in memory of another good friend who had been called home.

That you may know Post No. 5 by its membership occupies nearly all the earth, let me say that at a regular meeting held May 8, 1896, a letter was read saying that our good comrade, Andrew Hammond, had been killed in South Africa by natives. Date unknown.

Nov. 27, 1896, we were called upon to part with our much loved comrade, Geo. C. Brown. He had been Quartermaster for eleven years. His resignation was accepted with regret. He still retains his membership in the Post, though living in Alabama.

Moving time gets around to the best of people, and May 14, 1897, found the Post moved down to the fifth floor of the Masonic Temple. We had lost our high estate, and instead of being almost in sight of the battlements of heaven, had moved down thirteen floors, and it may be that the old adage will come true, for we had moved down

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Congress has done what humanity desires this monumental structure erected for the use of the dead here in the great city and made that an eternal resting place for all of our soldiers in forms of their already gone comrades and in the faces that we have known in life are looking for us and even this room will have the animation and life that never leaves here. In the hall, called the Hall of Honor, a place of memories and with the names of the heroes inside the city of Chicago will stand in high honor the memorial to the defenders of the Republic.

You have heard the story, leading many things and now let me state briefly a few things that were failures in

This first effort, that the first Grand Army Hall in Chicago was, among the earliest in the move to get a State Soldiers and Sailors Home also in the effort to have this National Memorial Hall erected in Chicago we found memorial services for deceased comrades to advance the interests of the Soldiers' Republic Home at Normal to prevent the unauthorized wearing of the Grand Army badge and to have the Republic Law passed. You gave the largest amount to the Legion Monument fund, you asked the Legislature to grant a portion of Dearborn Park for use of the veterans. You passed a resolution asking that the World's Fair be located in Chicago as early as August 1904. Your donation was gladly given for the General Sherman monument to be erected in the City of Washington and in many ways great influence was exerted in all that could be for the benefit of the soldier.

Charity has been extended with a liberal hand, fraternity has been exemplified, and loyalty to comrades, flag and country, has always shone forth in its truest sense.

Time will not permit me to tell of the relics and valuable property owned by the Post, but when the day comes for placing these mementoes of the past in Memorial Hall, a large quantity of valuable articles will be found on hand for that purpose.

Your Conrad fund will do good work in future years; your grave markers in the cemeteries will bear testimony for a generation to come of your care for those mustered out, and your beautiful lot and monument in Rosehill in all the days that are to be, will bear witness of your generous provision for the comrades who fell in life's battle, unable even to provide for themselves a resting place in God's acre.

Of the charter members, twenty-four in number, but three have marched along with the comrades up to this date, the rest have fallen by the wayside, many are dead, and others have dropped out at different times. The three surviving charter members are W. W. Calkins, Levi Dell and Henry C. Cooke.

The Post, in its twenty-five years, has had twenty-seven commanders, and it is a remarkable fact that they are all living to-day except three, Past Commanders Hiram Hilliard, John F. Kimberly and William H. Wilder, who died faithful men and good comrades. Of the balance, all still belong to the Post except L. H. Whitney, S. T. Lawrence, C. L. Bittinger and H. P. Thompson.

All of the past commanders reside in Chicago except C. L. Bittinger, who has lived for many years at Ocala, Florida, and Freeman Conner, now a Hoosier farmer at Valparaiso, Ind.

Another strange feature is the fact that without any intention of having it so, every commander without exception has belonged to a long term, or three years regiment, and served his full time during the war, unless mustered out on account of wounds, or other disabilities, incurred in the service.

Nothing would please me better than to call each of these past commanders by name, and tell you some good thing done by them individually, and also recount the deeds of every comrade in the Post, but you have been patient for a long time and for that reason it cannot be done now.

Our rolls show the total number of comrades that have been members of the Post to be 2,032, and the number remaining July 1, 1898, was 942. Think of it, more than two full regiments.

And what soldiers these comrades were, from the Potomac, from the Cumberland, from the Tennessee, from the Gulf, from all the armies, and from the squadrons, that fought on the sea, they have been gathered, heroes all working for the same object, never doubtful of the final outcome, always ready to do and die if need be, risking all that the nation might live and the Union be preserved.

Where in the world's historic page can you find another such a record of unselfish patriotism? Like the stars in heaven each army tried to out

shine and outdo every other army, and when the clouds of defeat obscured for a time the glorious feats of arms, it was only for a little while; then new successes came, and again glorious victory, like the stars from out the darkening cloud, shone forth with brighter luster than before.

Life is made up of events, and since our organization in 1873 the world has changed and its events have been beyond the imagination of man. In these years our great leaders have all been called home, new states have been added to our Union—yes—Cuba has been freed and the islands of the sea have come into our possession. We have lived to see the blue and the gray clasp hands, marching side by side, the sixth Massachusetts has been pelted in Baltimore once more, but this time with roses; we have also seen soldiers carried to war in sleeping cars, surely in our day the world has moved.

The Post has received many honors during its quarter of a century, and has been visited by every commander-in-chief with but three or four exceptions. Comrades J. S. Reynolds and E. D. Swain were elected and served as Senior Vice Commanders-in-Chief, and Comrade Guy T. Gould as Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, and many of our comrades have served on the staff of the National Commander from time to time.

In the Department of Illinois honors have also been given us with a lavish hand, for we have had six of our comrades fill the high office of Department Commander. They were Guy T. Gould, Hiram Hilliard, J. S. Reynolds, E. D. Swain, E. A. Blodgett and John C. Black. Comrade Hilliard

served three and Comrade Swain two terms, so that during our twenty-five years a comrade of this Post has been in command of the Department of Illinois nine years or more than one-third of the time. Greater recognition than this could not, with modesty, be asked.

Commander, the duty assigned me has been performed—some other comrade could have done it better, undoubtedly. Let me say, however, that this Post, and its affairs, have been a good part of my life through all these years. At the rising of its sun in 1873 my steps kept time to its first music, and marched along with the growing column until the meridian of its long day has passed, and now that the afternoon of declining years has been reached, my step, less elastic than before, is still keeping time, and sunset, with the long night, is almost in sight. Until the end let me be a comrade and friend to each and every member of this great Post.

Comrades and friends, in closing this address, the long roll of honor, the list of the dead must not be forgotten. Would that each member of the Post who rests on Fame's eternal camping ground, beyond the river, might be called by name here, and the story of his gallantry be given, his hardships and sufferings recounted in thrilling words, for each and every comrade deserves eulogy and enconium. It cannot be, for the record of what each one of these men have done is longer than an evening.

The past rises before me; in the vision can be

plainly seen long lines of blue, and again long lines of gray, in opposing deadly conflict—there lie the resulting dead, and there the wounded; the hospital with its sick, and the prison pen with its starving men are there.

The vision changes—there are no more battles—no more killed and maimed, there is no hospital, no prison pen, and stranger than all, there is no longer blue and gray, for, blending in one grand national color, all have clasped hands and now fight side by side for the Union. That was a vision of war and its resulting changes.

Again we look and see the comrades of this Post, coming from the former strife, entering into the battle of life, fighting for work and bread, growing older, and one by one answering the last roll call, leaving our ranks, and going to that last quiet resting place, there waiting under the weeping willow, while the sighing of the pine and cypress sing a requiem for our dead.

Comrades, we have laid away one hundred and ninety-six of those that walked with us in days gone by; they wait the judgment day, and let us pray that when the final bugle blast shall call them up the sentence of each one may be, Well done, enter now into peace and rest forever.

Commander, the work for which your detail calls has been completed, and now all that remains is to let tattoo beat and taps be sounded on the first twenty-five years of George H. Thomas Post, No. 5, Department of Illinois, Grand Army of the Republic.



